

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Andrew McKinnis. I am a student in Fairfield and am testifying to voice my strong support for Connecticut's SB2: *An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic*.

It is clear that isolation due to the pandemic has caused an increase in loneliness and depression. Humans thrive off of connection and need to be surrounded by others. The pandemic has increased teen suicide rates across the U.S. This hits close to home especially after a Junior at Fairfield Warde High School committed suicide in early February 2021.

The bill will allow students K-12 to take 4 mental health wellness days during the school year. As a student this is major. The stress of school, extracurriculars, and life can sometimes get so overwhelming you can't even focus in school. Taking a step back from time to time can help but currently it is hard to take a step back.

Passing this bill would be a critical step in improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,

Andrew McKinnis
Fairfield, CT